AMENDMENT OF NHLBI SOLICITATION
"Knowledge-Based Resource for Linking Animal Models to Human Disease"

Solicitation Number:	NHLBI-RR-08-18
Amendment Number:	Two (02)
Amendment Issue Date:	December 21, 2007
Proposal Due Date:	January 17, 2008
Point of Contact:	Rick Phillips, Contracting Officer National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Two Rockledge Center, Room 6132 6701 Rockledge Drive – MSC 7902 Bethesda, Maryland 20892-7902 Phone: 301.402.6462 E-mail: phillipr@nhlbi.nih.gov

The purpose of this amendment is to provide responses to questions submitted before December 14, 2007, and to make the following changes:

1. Section J, Attachment 4: *Information Technology Systems Security – Prospective Offeror Non-Disclosure Agreement* is hereby deleted from the RFP;

2. Section J, Attachment 19: *Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, OMB Form SF-LLL* is hereby deleted from the RFP. (Offerors shall submit Section J, Attachment 13: *Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, OMB Form SF-LLL* as part of their business proposals.);

3. Paragraph L.2.a.13, **Institutional Responsibility Regarding Conflicting Interests of Investigators**, is hereby deleted from the RFP;

4. The requirement to submit NIH Form 1688-1, Project Objectives, as stated in Section L.2.b.1.a. **Project Objectives, NIH-1688-1**, is hereby deleted from the RFP; Section J, Attachment 8: *Project Objectives, NIH 1688-1* is hereby deleted from the RFP.

5. to revise Section M., Paragraph 2.1, **Technical Evaluation Criteria** to read as follows:

   1. Professional Qualifications and Technical Expertise (40 points)

   Documented experience, technical expertise and availability of personnel relevant to the development, maintenance, operation and provision of timely upgrades to the electronic directory (database) as an independent and reliable source of information about disease models tools and resources, including interacting with the animal models and related research resource communities.

   2. Technical Approach (30 points)

   Adequacy of technical approach to create an electronic directory of animal models and develop a plan for a portal for integration of data, models and knowledge about animal models. The approach must demonstrate a clear awareness of the contract objectives and include appropriate plans for the following: technical requirements for the design, development, and launching of the web based guidance for recruiting support from the community of data depositors; the assimilation, dissemination and exchange of information via the electronic directory; a portal to provide innovative and intuitive access to a broad spectrum of disease model information by a diverse user community; and performance self evaluation and progress reporting.

6. To change the proposal due date from January 11, 2008 to January 17, 2008.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

Questions in bold.

1. **Section J – List of Attachments includes Attachment 4, <u>Information Technology Systems Security – Prospective Offeror Non-Disclosure Agreement</u>. This attachment states that "The Government has determined that the solicitation requires prospective offerors to have access to sensitive information in order to prepare an offer." Offerors are referred to Section L.III of the RFP for a description of the sensitive information.**

   a. **There is no Section L.III in the RFP. Please clarify.**

   b. **Please indicate when, how, and where potential offerors will be provided access to sensitive information.**

   c. **The attachment further indicates that "the Government has determined that any individual having access to the sensitive information described in the RFP must possess a valid and current Suitability Determination at the Level identified in Section L.III. of the RFP…."**

      a. **Please provide a description of the sensitive information referred to in this statement.**

      b. **Please identify the Suitability Determination level needed to access the sensitive information.**

   d. **The attachment also requires that the submitter attach a copy of their current suitability determination. How does one obtain a copy of their suitability determination?**

   e. **Please provide instructions for submitting this non-disclosure agreement and suitability determination.**

   Attachment 4 of Section J is hereby deleted from the RFP.

2. **Section J – List of Attachments includes <u>Disclosure of Lobbying Activities</u>, OMB Form SF-LLL as both a "Business Proposal" attachment (Attachment 13) and an "Informational" attachment (Attachment 19). Please clarify if this form is to be completed and submitted with the business proposal or is provided for information purposes only.**

   Attachment 19 of Section J is hereby deleted from the RFP. Offerors shall submit Attachment 13, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, as part of their business proposals.

3. **RFP p36, L.2.a.13: Since this is not a grant but a contract, does this apply as written? If so, do commercial entities need to meet the requirement described in section L.2.a.13 and, if so, how? Or does this requirement only apply to participating research institutions and their staff?**

   Paragraph L.2.a.13 is hereby deleted from the RFP.

4. **Per RFP statement [Section L.2.b.1./RFP page 39], "The offeror shall insert a completed NIH Form 1688-1, Project Objective, as provided in Section J, Attachments, behind the Title Page of each copy of the proposal, along with the "Government Notice for Handling Proposals." – please confirm it is acceptable to place the "Government Notice for Handling Proposals" first, directly followed by NIH Form 1688-1, "Project Objective", and place both after the Title Page in this order?**

   The requirement to submit NIH Form 1688-1, Project Objectives, as stated in Section L.2.b.1.a. **Project Objectives, NIH-1688-1**, is hereby deleted from the RFP; Section J, Attachment 8: *Project Objectives, NIH 1688-1* is hereby deleted from the RFP.

5. **Will the awardee be expected to host the database and Web site?**

   Yes.

6. **If a hosting environment is required, are there any special access or security limitations that should be addressed in the proposal?**

   No.

7. **Where will the website and portal be hosted? Will they be hosted on a government server or a contractor server? If on the contractor's server, please provide detailed specifications, requirements, and costing assumptions related to equipment, software, bandwidth, and IT support services needed.**

   Hosting of the portal is not a requirement of the Statement of Work. It is expected that each offeror will propose specifications commensurate with its technical approach. Each offeror may propose costs for website hosting commensurate with its technical approach.

8. Most digitized information in the form of full text and/or abstracts has been aggregated for the past twenty years or so. Is it expected, as part of this contract, to do conversion of hardcopy material in relation to the model origin, predecessor or history, or only to capture what little information is available in the reference to the information?

It is envisioned that offerors could take either of the following two approaches or propose an approach of its own:

1. Build the e-directory using a very limited number of resources (e.g., only NHPs and rats) and add depth by conversion of critical hardcopy.

2. Build a more all-encompassing e-directory and include a plan for hard copy conversion.

9. There are commercial products available which would speed the development of the portal, however that source code would not be available to the government at the end of the contract. The products of course can be licensed. Do you see a problem with that?

Offerors are free to propose this approach.

10. Animal models are not always related to specific human disease but rather the disease process. Is there expectation that those models related to various disease processes be included?

The expectation is to eventually 'approach the capture' all disease models. A critical function of the knowledge environment that will evolve from these efforts is the ready identification of data or information that crosses disease boundaries – information that is currently not easily found, if ever, while searching in a specific disease space.

11. On page 1 of the SOW, it states that "This resource directory would provide reference materials, information about the resources, and information about the animal models themselves." To assist offerors in fully understanding the Agency's vision for the electronic directory, please provide further definition and some examples of the types of "reference materials" and "information about the resources" that would be included in the directory?

It is envisioned that the electronic directory will constitute a collection of data about the sources identified in section C, Component 1.1 that are sufficient to educate a user as to the applicability and accessibility of the services of a particular source. It is not expected that this electronic directory will be complete at expiration of the contract but rather that the directory be populated with exhaustive data about a few animal models and, most importantly, that there is a model established for the future collection and incorporation of additional models-sources data. This meta-model simply defines the rules for assembling the animal resource related data into the directory. This model for extending the directory should be sufficiently detailed to be easily usable by a potential follow-on contract whether the original Contractor, the Government or another contractor.

If one were asked to explain the utility of a particular models resource, a possible source of information for the response may be publications that site the use of the resource – this is one example of "reference material". "Information about the resources" refers to the items such as accessibility to information or services offered by the resource, how the resource accumulates and annotates its data, and the expertise and background of employees. These types of information should be included in the overall metadata as described on page 2 of the SOW.

12. Based on our understanding of the SOW the main products of Component 1 are:

   a. an exemplary electronic directory of animal models of disease based upon 3 - 4 species along with a detailed plan for expansion to include additional models; and

   b. a project web site for the portal described in Component 2.

Is this correct and exactly what type of "detailed plan" is envisioned; for example, would this include a wireframe and a prototype (application front end), or is the appropriate technical architecture and actual software application to be developed?

The project web site should originate with and describe the electronic directory and provide segue into the concept of the Component 2 portal. Either of the approaches to the detailed plan referenced in question 12 are acceptable, however offerors are not limited to these approaches.

13. Please explain what is meant by a "comprehensive meta-model for collecting data about the sources?" We are unclear about the intended meaning because a meta-model for data collection seems more applicable to

Component 2. The type of data collected for an electronic directory of animal models in Component 1 would be primarily from existing animal model databases and therefore the data collection process is fairly obvious. It seems to us that a meta-model for collecting data that would meet long-term project objectives, on the other hand, should be capable of obtaining data from sources developed for other purposes, and would therefore benefit from the community input that is obtained as part of Task 11 of Component 1.

The meta-model in this solicitation refers to an attempt to circumscribe the domain of animal models resources using a clear set of constructs and rules. The purpose of this e-directory is to provide an initial entry point for a user (naïve or sophisticated) into very large and complex space of rapidly expanding and highly diverse disease models data. Agreeably, most of the data for the e-directory will be from existing databases and the collection process is fairly obvious. However we are asking the offeror to accommodate the words “most” and “fairly” in the preceding sentence. To maintain consistency over time and optimize extensibility, this entry-way must be constructed using rigid rules even if the process being modeled appears to be obvious.

14. SOW item 2 under Component 1 states that “The meta-data shall be sufficient to define the purpose for which the model was created, its usability, validity, reliability and channels of integration with other models.” It is not clear what is meant by “channels of integration with other models.” Please provide clarification, explanation, and/or examples.

The final goal of this “animal models resource” is to provide a single query point that will return a broadly informed response to a question regarding the role of animal models in understanding a specific disease. Even though a query may ask about a specific model, the response will include similar or related information obtained from other models. As an illustration, one might place a query regarding quantification of neuronal loss in Alzheimer’s disease–the response should return information from both Drosophila data and mouse data. This inclusive response would require that there be a means of integration (hard-wired or transient) of the data from the two different resources. We use “channels of integration with other models” as a generic way to describe this cross-communication or interoperability. If these channels already exist for a particular set of models, this fact should be captured in the directory.

15. Task 3 of Component 1, to "implement the meta-model in a database," appears to be an implementation of the directory from the description of examples of metadata in point 4. If so, is it the specific intent of the government that the web-based electronic directory should be implemented in the form of a searchable database rather than as a Web page? Is this the "resource" (indicated in point 9) for which tutorials and help pages are to be developed? Please clarify and comment.

The envisioned resource is a searchable database. The purpose of tutorials and help venues is to encourage both contributors to, and users of, the resource.

16. Given the intent to publicize and popularize the Component 1 resource, using it as a means of attracting community buy-in and input for Component 2, what level of effort is anticipated for this phase of the project (relative to the long-term objectives)?

Component 1 should be considered not only as a roadmap to Component 2 but there should be a stand-alone usefulness in Component 1. A Component 1 response to a simple query such as “what models exist for Alzheimer’s” will be sufficient and useful for some users (e.g. a curious patient). Although this Component 1 response may seem of limited value, it should educate and guide subsequent research-specific queries into the more complex data forms accessed through the portal (Component 2). It is expected that Component 1 effort, including popularizing, would be greatest in Year 1 but refining efforts may continue throughout the project period.

17. Task 5 of Component 1 requires the contractor to survey the market of potential users. The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that OMB clearance be obtained if identical questions are posed to 10 or more members of the public (non-Federal employees). What is the Government’s estimate of the number of users to be surveyed? Will the contractor be required to obtain OMB clearance for any aspect of this project?

NCRR will obtain OMB clearance for this project. It is assumed that some paper will be generated but that much of the surveying will be in electronic format and will certainly involve more than 10 members of the public.

18. Task 9 of Component 1 states that “Objectives and activities of the resource shall be announced in scientific journals such as Science and Nature.” Please clarify NCRR’s and the contractor’s roles with respect to: (1) preparing objectives and activities; (2) identifying, contacting, and corresponding with suitable scientific journals; and (3) using paid advertising for the announcements? If NCRR contemplates using paid advertising for these announcements, for costing purposes, please provide either a dollar amount that offerors should include in their proposed budgets, or uniform assumptions/specifications (ad size, use of color, where in the

journal the ad should appear, etc.) for developing costs.

It is expected that the NCRR Program Officer and the Contractor will work together developing items (1) and (2). If it is decided to utilize paid advertising in a particular journal, NCRR would expect to use a quarter page ad, black and white, in the positions open section.

19. **Task 9 of Component 1 states that "Any substantive changes to the initial announcement or to acquisition or distribution policies…" In terms of work to be performed by the contractor, please clarify or explain what is meant by "acquisition or distribution policies."**

The model for acquiring information to be included in the e-directory should be agreed upon and adhered to. However, if it is determined that a modification of this information acquisition process will greatly improve the resource then this should be a joint decision between NCRR and the Contractor. The same is true for the method of distributing the data in the e-directory; e.g. if an improved way of providing access to the e-directory's information becomes apparent then this will be discussed by Contractor and NCRR before changes are implemented.

20. **Task 4 of Component 2 requires the contractor to "Identify a 'tracking' system for recording, managing and comparing various pathways of data and knowledge processing and integration. Is this requirement for web analytics software or some other type of tracking system? Once identified, is the contractor required to evaluate, purchase, and implement a tracking system? Please clarify what work contractor is expected to perform with respect to this task.**

In accordance with the Statement of Work, it is not required that the Contractor purchase or implement a tracking system. It is expected that the Contractor provide information regarding the tracking system(s) of choice sufficient to justify its use in evaluating a resource (portal) activity to improve performance of the resource; resource activity to be evaluated includes capturing user/donator data as well as methods of access and retrieval of data from the resource.

21. **RFP p5, C.2.a: What is the difference between the monthly technical reports (C.2.a) and the study status reports (C.2.b.4)? Could they be combined?**

The monthly, annual, and final reports referenced in C.2.a.1 and C.2.b are the same. Paragraph C.2.a.1 is a boilerplate introductory paragraph recently included in NIH RFPs.

22. **RFP p5, C.2.a: What is the difference between the annual technical reports (C.2.a) and the annual reports (C.2.b.5)? Could they be combined?**

The monthly, annual, and final reports referenced in C.2.a.1 and C.2.b are the same. Paragraph C.2.a.1 is a boilerplate introductory paragraph recently included in NIH RFPs.

23. **Section C.2.b.3., <u>Site Visit Reports</u> (page 6) states "Reports for all site visits <u>taken</u> (emphasis added) shall be submitted within two weeks of completion of the visit." This seems to indicate that contractor may be required to make visits to other sites; however, the Statement of Work (SOW page 4) indicates that site visits to the contractor's facilities will be made by NCRR staff and Steering Committee members, but makes no mention of the contractor making visits to other sites. Please clarify if contractor will be required to visit other sites. If so, for costing purposes, please provide uniform assumptions for offerors to use in developing travel costs.**

The contractor will not be required to take site visits.

24. **The hyperlink provided in Article H.7.e., Rules of Behavior, on page 15 of the RFP (http://irm.cit.nih.gov/security/nihitrob.html), does not work. Please provide a properly functioning link.**

The link (http://irm.cit.nih.gov/security/nihitrob.html) should now be properly functioning. Please contact the Contracting Officer if you have further problems.

25. **The RFP at page 32, provides an estimated level of effort of four full-time equivalents (FTE) per year. To assist offerors in preparing responsive proposals that best address the government's requirement, please provide a list of labor categories (e.g,, project director, programmer, web developer, etc.) that make up the four FTE and the government's best estimate of hours allocated to each.**

It is incumbent on the individual offeror to propose labor categories commensurate to its proposed technical approach for accomplishing the Statement of Work. Moreover, it is the offeror's responsibility to propose a reasonable and appropriate number of hours for each proposed labor category.

26. **How did NHLBI determine that it would take four individuals to complete this project?**

The Government estimates the effort for this project is four full time equivalents (FTE). Please note that 'FTE' is not equivalent to ‘individual’. This estimate was determined by NCRR program staff in conjunction with the Contracting Officer.

27. What job categories would fill these four positions?

It is incumbent on the offeror to propose job categories commensurate with its approach to accomplishing the Statement of Work.

28. Is your budget commensurate with just these four positions?

The estimate of direct labor costs in the Independent Government Cost Estimate is commensurate with 4 FTE.

29. What proportion of the total effort (four full-time equivalent personnel for each year of the project, RFP at 32) does the government anticipate expending on developing and mounting the electronic directory of animal models of human diseases, as required in Component 1?

It is incumbent on the individual offeror to propose labor categories commensurate to its proposed technical approach for accomplishing the Statement of Work. Moreover, it is the offeror’s responsibility to propose a reasonable and appropriate number of hours for each proposed labor category.

30. Does a complete security plan need to be included in the proposal? In section 2. b. 6. - INSTRUCTIONS TO OFFERORS, Technical Proposal Instructions, Information Security, the RFP states that this is to be addressed in a separate section entitled "Information Security" and that a complete description of our company plan, documentation, training, etc. is to be covered. For other contracts we've had with NIH institutes, this has been part of the Work Plan and/or QAPP submitted after award. Is a comprehensive detailed description of our Information Security plan to be part of the proposal?

No. Per paragraph i. of Article H.7., **Information Security**, the Information System Security Plan for this project shall be submitted by the contract awardee no later than 60 days after contract award. However, offerors shall address information security in their proposals per Section L.2.b.6.

31. Please confirm that the Compliance Matrix will NOT be counted in the page count of the Technical Proposal.

This comment is not clear. For future reference, any part of the proposal that is not part of the technical plan can be included in the appendices. While there are page limits for the Technical Plan and Appendices, there is not a page limit on the Technical Proposal as a whole.

32. There are several items that appear to be required in BOTH the Technical Proposal and the Business Proposal, such as the “Proposal Summary & Data Record” and “Qualifications of Offerors” – please clarify if these are to be included in both proposals, and, if not, which one each is to be included in, as well as where they are to be placed.

The "Proposal Summary and Data Record" is listed in Section J as an attachment to the Business Proposal and should be submitted as such. Other references to this document are included in the General Instructions. The reference to "Qualifications of the Offeror" included in the Business Proposal Instructions (p. 51) is relevant to the experience of your organization and a response should be included with the Business Proposal. The reference to "qualifications of personnel" included in the Technical Proposal Instructions (p. 40) is relevant to personnel. The Technical Proposal should include information relevant to this section of the RFP.

33. Please clarify if you do or do not want a copy of the offeror’s Travel Policy. RFP Statement on page 30 states “Travel Policy. The offeror's (and any proposed subcontractor's) written travel policy shall not be submitted with the initial business proposal. All offerors included in the competitive range will be required to submit a travel policy as a part of their final proposal revision.” WHILE RFP Statement on page 55 states “One copy of the offeror's (and any proposed subcontractor's) written travel policy shall be included in the business proposal (original only).”

The language in the text of paragraph b. on page 55 is boilerplate. The "Just in Time" procedures take precedence here and the Travel Policy, if requested by the Contracting Officer, will only need to be provided by offerors included in the competitive range.

34. What is considered Government Furnished Equipment (GFE)? What will be provided as GFE? How will the equipment be procured – by the Government, or by the contractor and leased back to the Government?

Government Furnished Equipment will not be provided by the government. Offerors may propose Contractor Acquired equipment in their business proposals. As this cost item would be negotiated, it is impossible to discern at this time what, if any, equipment will be provided by the government and how any equipment would be procured.

35. **Per RFP statement [Section L.2.a.6.] "The Technical Plan (objectives, approach, methods and procedures, and schedule) of the technical proposal shall not exceed 50 single-sided pages or 25 double-sided pages. This page limitation does not include the cover sheet, abstract, table of contents, personnel, facilities, equipment and resources, other considerations, other support, cost information, and literature cited. Appendices shall not exceed a total of 100 single-sided pages or 50 double-sided pages. Pages in excess of the limitation will be deleted and will be neither read nor evaluated. Each page of the technical proposal must be numbered sequentially. Offerors are encouraged to limit the overall size of the technical proposal, inclusive of appendices, attachments, etc." – please confirm that there is NOT a page limit on the Technical Proposal as a whole, and that the page limit of 50 single-sided pages is applicable only to the "Technical Plan" portion of the Technical Proposal. ALSO please confirm there are no page limitations on resumes.**

    There is NOT a page limit on the Technical Proposal as a whole. There is no page limit on resumes; however these shall be included as an appendix.

36. **Technical Evaluation Criterion No. 1 - <u>Professional Qualifications and Technical Expertise</u> (40 points).** ***Documented experience, technical expertise and availability of key personnel relevant to the development, maintenance, operation and provision of timely upgrades to the electronic directory (database) as an independent and reliable source of information about disease models tools and resources, including interacting effectively with the animal models and related research resource communities.***

    a. **Please indicate what labor categories, staff positions, or functions the government considers key.**

       We envision that the Principal Investigator/Project Director will be determined key. Additional staff may be identified as key personnel during negotiations.

    b. **For purposes of evaluation are all professional contractor proposed staff to be considered key?**

       No.

    c. **Please confirm that the government has no preconceived expectations with respect to the experience and expertise of proposed key personnel?**

       The Government confirms this. The experience and expertise of proposed personnel will be evaluated in accordance with Section M Part 2.1 of the RFP.

    d. **For purposes of evaluation, please describe the "documented experience," "technical expertise," and "availability" that the government considers "relevant" or describe the factors that the government will use to determine the relevancy of experience and technical expertise of key personnel.**

       For "documented experience", please refer to Section L.2.b.1.c. of the RFP. For "technical expertise", please refer to Section M, part 2.1 of the RFP. For "availability", please refer to Sections L.2.b.1.c. and L.2.c.8. of the RFP.

    e. **For evaluation purposes, please specify what is meant by "documented experience." For example, will academic degrees be weighted more or less favorably than work history; how is self-taught web programming expertise (common in this field) to be "documented;" is laboratory research work with a particular animal model considered "documented experience?"**

       Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria in Section M of the RFP.

    f. **What guidelines will reviewers be provided with respect to evaluation of documented experience, technical expertise, and availability of proposed staff?**

       All offerors will be evaluated solely based upon the Technical Evaluation Criteria specified in the solicitation.

    g. **Given the diverse nature of activities in the SOW, please indicate what weight will be assigned to different types of "relevant" experience. For example, will experience with a specific animal model be evaluated more or less favorably than an advanced degree in bioinformatics and will experience mounting and maintaining a biomedical information site for a government agency be evaluated more favorably than running a commercial site?**

       All offerors will be evaluated solely based upon the Technical Evaluation Criteria specified in the solicitation. There are no weighted sub-factors in the Technical Evaluation Criteria.

h. How will the mix of experience needed for different aspects of the project (e.g., IT, administration, interaction with and outreach to the research community, evaluation of bioinformatics tools for the second component of the project) be scored? Will these components be weighted equally? Can expertise needed for each component be ranked in order of importance?

All offerors will be evaluated solely based upon the Technical Evaluation Criteria specified in the solicitation.

i. How will the mix of experience needed for different aspects of the project (e.g., IT, administration, interaction with and outreach to the research community, evaluation of bioinformatics tools for the second component of the project) be scored? Will these components be weighted equally? Can the government rank the expertise needed for each component in order of importance?

All offerors will be evaluated solely based upon the Technical Evaluation Criteria specified in the solicitation.

j. The phrase "interacting effectively with the animal models and related research resource communities." is not meaningful. Please explain what is meant by "interacting effectively" and how this will be evaluated.

Section M of the RFP has been revised to delete "effectively" from Technical Evaluation Criterion 1.

k. Given the diverse types of labor involved in this activity and the limited resources available (4 FTE per year), will a more favorable evaluation be given to a proposal that proposes a particular mix of labor? For example, one proposal might use half the available labor hours for website development and maintenance for component 1, while another might devote more labor hours to developing bioinformatics tools for component 2. Which will be scored more favorably?

All offerors will be evaluated solely based upon the Technical Evaluation Criteria specified in the solicitation.

l. How will the government ensure that different peer reviewers will apply consistent and objective evaluation criteria?

Proposals shall be evaluated only on the Technical Evaluation Criteria in Section M of the RFP. Per NIH policy, Scientific Review Officers must ensure that Technical Evaluation Panel members address all proposals and factors impartially and completely, basing their evaluations on proposals as submitted, and clarified by the CO as appropriate.

37. Technical Evaluation Criterion No. 2 – <u>Technical Approach</u> (30 points) indicates a need to propose "<u>specific technical requirements</u> (emphasis added) for the design, development, and launching of the web based electronic directory." However, the Statement of Work describes tasks involved in selecting and implementing a design, with launching to take place within the first year. If determining appropriate technical requirements is a major part of the proposed activity, how can the technical approach provide specific details (and be evaluated on these proposed details) as part of the proposal? Please clarify this requirement.

Offerors should "…include *appropriate plans* for the following: specific technical requirements for the design, development, and launching of the web based guidance…". Offerors should provide a proposal with *plans* to accommodate any specific technical requirements to accomplish the task. For example, if the offeror plans to mount a database and the offeror has previous experience in doing so, then the offeror should have knowledge of specific requirements to do this and it should be stated by the offeror that there is a plan to meet these specific requirements. However, if the offeror plans to develop a website and has no experience developing a website then it is expected that the plans to accommodate specific requirements related to website development will be based on knowledge of what others have done in the field of website development. There may be tasks for which the offeror can identify no specific requirements–in this instance the offeror should state such and then present a plan on how to determine the requirements which will be used subsequently to complete the task. The proposal should be an accurate depiction of how the offeror plans to address the tasks in the SOW.

38. Technical Evaluation Criterion No. 4 - <u>Facility and Equipment</u> (10 points). ***Adequacy, availability and accessibility of existing resources such as computer equipment, computer software, web system, data security and office space. Proposed plan and justification for acquisition of equipment and resources necessary for achieving the overall contract objectives.***

a. Please provide the relative or comparable evaluation weights for (1) adequacy, availability and accessibility of existing resources and (2) a plan for acquiring equipment and resources. Will offeror's who proposed the acquisition of equipment and resources be scored less favorably than those who do not propose to acquire equipment and resources?

All offerors will be evaluated solely based upon the Technical Evaluation Criteria specified in the solicitation.

b. If an offeror does not propose to acquire equipment, must they still submit a plan?

Please refer to Section M, Part 2.4 of the RFP. If offerors currently possess sufficient equipment to satisfy the requirements of the SOW, they may state this in lieu of submitting a plan.

39. RFP p37, section L.2.a.14.a, it says we must submit "A list of any contracts completed during the past five years and ALL CONTRACTS currently being performed that are similar in nature to the solicitation workscope." Does this mean "A list of any contracts either completed during the past five years or currently being performed that are similar in nature to the solicitation workscope" or does it mean "A list of any contracts completed during the past five years" as well as "ALL CONTRACTS currently being performed that are similar in nature to the solicitation workscope"?

Offerors shall provide "a list of any contracts completed during the past five years" as well as "ALL CONTRACTS currently being performed that are similar in nature to the solicitation work scope".

40. RFP p37, section L.2.a.14 states that past performance should be included in the Technical Proposal. Section L.2.a.6 does not indicate whether past performance submissions are included or excluded from the 50 page limit for the Technical Plan or the 100 page limit for Appendices. Please clarify whether past performance information is additional or included in any of the page limits stated in L.2.a.6.

Past performance information should be included in the appendices of each offeror's proposal.

41. RFP page 45, C.1: Is "fee" different from "profit"?

No.

42. RFP page 45, C.1: In this CPAF contract, what percentage of the award fee is anticipated to be the "base" fee?

As fee is a negotiable cost item, no specific percentage for base or award fee is anticipated at this time. Offerors should include percentages for base and award fee in their business proposals.

43. RFP page 45, C.1: When would the "base" fee be billed?

Base fee will be billed in installments (typically on monthly invoices) based on the percentage of completion of work.

44. RFP page 45, C.1: Do we need to establish in our proposal the benchmarks for the award fee, or will the government provide them to us?

Offerors are free to propose benchmarks for the award fee in their proposals. Prior to any contract award, a Quality Assurance Surveillance Plan will be negotiated with the successful offeror detailing key performance requirements and criteria for determining award fee.

45. RFP p.51, section L.2.c.6: May offerors include the organizational experience or past performance of subcontractors, if it is relevant to the scope of work?

Yes.

46. RFP p.51, section L.2.c.6.d: This section states that "The same type of organizational experience and past performance data should be submitted." It is unclear what is meant by "The same type ... of data"", as there is no other reference to any organizational experience or past performance data submission in this section. Please clarify the government's requirements for organizational experience and past performance data as it relates to this section.

This statement refers to paragraphs L.2.c.6.b. and L.2.c.6.c., accordingly.

47. What is the government's independent cost estimate for this project? If this information is not releasable, please explain how the government arrived at its estimate and indicate if it is based on the business procedures and practices of a particular vendor.

As this is a competitive acquisition, the Independent Government Cost Estimate (IGCE) cannot be divulged. The IGCE was not based on the business procedures and practices of a particular vendor. Rather, the IGCE was based on experience with similar projects and analysis of anticipated costs by the Contracting Officer and Project Officer.

48. RFP, p8, section F.1.b: The table in this section appears to have a formatting problem whereby the "Addressee" is broken apart for each deliverable. Can the government please re-issue this table with the correct formatting, or explain what is represented in the RFP?

The horizontal lines included between the rows in the 'Addressee' column of the table in Article F.1.b are the result of a formatting error in NIH's recently instituted Document Generating System. There are two addresses included, one for the Contracting Officer and one for the Project Officer. The relevant quantities of each deliverable item number are located in the columns adjacent to each NIH staff member's address. For example, one 'Monthly Study Status Report' shall be sent to the Contracting Officer and two 'Monthly Study Status Reports' shall be sent to the Project Officer.

49. Has NHLBI awarded other contracts that use Metadata Knowledge-based resources and repositories?

No.

50. What position within the Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute will the contractor's Principal Investigator interface with?

The Contracting Officer for this project will be from NHLBI. The Project Officer will be from NCRR.

51. Re: C.1.9. How long do you propose the contractor is responsible for populating the resource?

This section actually addresses <u>popularization not population</u>; i.e. rendering the resource visible and attractive to potential users. This process is not likely to extend beyond the negotiated contract period and will be most intense in the first quarter.

52. C.2.4. Are you asking to just identify the tracking system alone?

For the purposes of this solicitation, the contractor shall identify or describe a proposed tracking system but it is not mandatory to incorporate or use the system.

53. Will the government supply the existing knowledge structures i.e. ontologies, taxonomies, etc?

This is a component of the meta-model. The existing and most relevant knowledge structures will be best defined by individual animal models resource directors. Interaction with and collection of information from specific animal model resources will be facilitated by NCRR staff.

54. NIH is required to have peer review evaluators of proposals for research and development contracts. 48 C.F.R. § 315.305(a)(3)(ii)(F) (2005). Is this acquisition considered Research and Development (R&D) or R&D support requiring peer review procedures?

This procurement is not considered research and development (R&D), nor R&D support, per the utilization of NAICS code 541512.

55. Why is the award going to be made in September 08?

The decision to estimate a contract award date of September 2008 was based on program and budgetary requirements of NCRR.